1 1 MAR 1981

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NOTE FOR: ⬚
        Deputy Director for Compliance, OF

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FROM: ⬚
    Information Handling Systems Architect

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SUBJECT: ⬚ Phase I Overview (Vol I)
    for DOS FMS

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Thanks for a look at the ⬚ submission. I didn't have time
to read the whole thing, so I spot checked.

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In general, it looks to me like they are headed for
implementation of the user's wish list. That can be a serious
mistake--a big system that costs several times what it ought to
and is late. I didn't see any words reflecting hard-headed
tradeoffs, system implications of some of the initial
requirements, or scoping types of summaries. In the latter
category, there is a separate periodic report identified for each
management function-- about 950 different reports. At that, they
didn't even identify the ad hoc reports, or the real time
functions. That latter is a big factor in defining system
requirements. It all adds up to way too much, to me.

A good area to cut back might be all that management
planning stuff. It was not clear that anybody knows what is
really meant there, at this point in time, and it can really
throw sand in the gears with respect to getting the basic
operational capability needed.

All that justification stuff about such things as not
knowing what property they had, or how much money had been spent
left me cold. Even the best systems have errors and error
rates--if nothing else, you have input data errors. The fact
that there are errors is irrelevant. The questions are what
kind, how many, and what is needed to avoid them (e.g., an
hierarchical family of edit programs).

The lack of specificity of the thinking in discussing
requirements caused me some concern. I don't know what is meant
by such terms as "derive" and "crosswalk." They sound like cart
blanche terms to me. I annotated some stuff along these lines on
pp 34-35, which I happened to spot check. (Just erase after
reading) Guys who are supposed to be pros at this type of system
should be tighter on this stuff than this document reflects.

A major omission at this level is the real time requirements
of the system. Even if it is not worked through at this point,

there should be recognition that while most of the data is going
to be entered into the system and processed in a batch mode,
there may be some requirements for real time entry and data
retrieval. If identified by users, where? If none, they should
say so. One of the principal areas where these can arise is in
the edit and approval of data prior to entry, or of
disbursements.

Even if State thinks they want all this, I don't think they
do. They ought to guide their contractor's effort in the next
phase to focus in on the operational requirement, dropping out
all the nebulous management planning material, and simplifying by
reducing the number of separate reports and reporting functions
through consolidation and commonality identifications.

There should also be recognition re the next phase, that it
is necessary to define the software architecture in such a way
that the daily batch processing proceeds in a linear manner with
minimal control requirements. There may well be some operational,
data input, and reporting constraints that result from such a
requirement.

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